

RELATIONSHIP OF PAROLE AND PENITENTIARY STAFF

If, as previously suggested, the parole staff should become involved in the programme prescription for the inmate at the time of entry to the institution and should follow the inmate through the various steps of his programme it appears desirable that there should be an amalgamation of the parole and institutional classification staffs so that they may work in a closely coordinated way in regard to the inmate's programme and eventual release. The danger is that the parole staff working in the institutions might become institutionalized; but they are strongly linked with the community through the District Offices and receive reports regarding the community relationships of the inmate and the social and economic climate to which he expects to return. Rotation of staff from the institution setting to the field services in the community would also be of value in maintaining a desirable balance of experience.

The actual details of the organization of such a decision would need administrative consideration; but it is suggested that the Executive Director of the Parole Service, the Director of Inmate Training and the Director of Classification of the Penitentiary Service form a Commission on Inmate Training and Release to supervise this combined staff and programme.

The institutions should base their treatment program on the expectation that they will have prepared the inmate for return to his community by the time of his Parole Eligibility Release (P.E.R.) date and that, if he has, in fact, achieved the program agreed upon, he will be paroled on that date or, on completion of the program, sooner or later.

This calls for an early study and evaluation of the inmate jointly by the penitentiary and parole staff and for a post-sentence evaluation of his community situation. There should be a determination, in cooperation with the inmate, of his program which would take advantage of the availability of the educational, industrial and vocational training resources available throughout the system compatible with his grading as to security. Unless an active treatment plan is worked out, parole may not be granted at the optimal time in the man's sentence and in relation to his program completion.

The program should be geared to the P.E.R. date rather than his release date and should provide him with the maximum preparation with marketable skills for the current employment field attainable within the time available. This is particularly important in cases requiring psychiatric, medical and dental treatment which should be completed by the P.E.R. date. Where continuing psychiatric treatment is required following release, referral should be made by the institutional psychiatrist in cooperation with the proposed community supervisory agency. This might well involve a Temporary Absence Pass to permit interview with the community psychiatrist prior to release on Parole. Such passes should also be routinely permitted to enable the inmate to interview his proposed supervisor in the agency which will be responsible for his supervision on release.

The post sentence report suggested above becomes very important in such prescription programming and is really a community assessment done at the time of admission to the

institution. This is a realistic check on the inmate's own story and the information he gives in his initial interview. It would supplement in depth the pre-sentence probation report, if available. This would be a valuable source of insight to the penitentiary staff whose orientation in the past has been institutional and it is most important that a realistic plan be built up before the inmate leaves the institution. His adaptation to the prison milieu tends to lead to an unrealistic view of the outside. For the inmate, the outside does not really exist, and there is a psychological postponement of facing what the realities of life will eventually be when he again enters the competitive social and economic community. The plan should be flexible to allow for breakdown and the inmate should be helped to anticipate a shifting and changing approach to his re-establishment in the light of the actualities he encounters.

In view of the effects of imprisonment and the emotional and practical problems to be faced on release, it becomes apparent that pre-release preparation plans an important part in the transition of the inmate from the dependency producing prison experience to the increasingly complex community. There is often a terminal period of anxiety before release and this may be heightened by the pre-release interview conducted by the classification officer. At this time the various services available to help the inmate are outlined to him and he may elect to seek help and have his name listed for interview.

The difficulty is to focus the anxiety on the significant problems the inmate will meet and to work through the false assurances of past memories and the projection of future intentions. In fact, with some inmates who state they "have it made" the problem is to create some healthy anxiety or divert existing but unreal anxieties into appropriate channels.

Inmates who have achieved an adjustment, neurotic or otherwise, to the prison life and community find it difficult to think ahead to new problems and adjustments. This threatens their present security which may have been arrived at with difficulty. The tendency is to think superficially and materialistically about survival in the free community and to postpone or avoid the basic issues of personality reintegration, renewal of relationships, development of new habit patterns and changing attitudes to criminality and authority.

For a man to involve himself sincerely and with honest interest in pre-release preparation is a decision akin to religious conversion. He is in effect acknowledging that his past way of life has been wrong, that he wants to become a "Square John" and live within the law, that he is prepared to forsake his old associates and, in effect, to bear witness to this in the prison community where many of the subtle pressures are against rehabilitation and for the maintenance of solidarity as a criminal group. In effect, the inmate who does move in this way into pre-release planning is crossing the marginal line between the inmate body and the administration though he is not necessarily identifying with the administration. He is forsaking the protective coloration of the inmate group and striking out individualistically for a new life.

It is little wonder then that many men come to pre-release preparation without having arrived at any such basic decisions. Their view is that the post release help they may receive is like a lifebuoy in the ocean or some insurance which might come in handy if the